

## A Right-Wing Kook Thanksgiving

J.J. Johnson 11.20.01

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It's that time of the year again — the family get-together, cherished by many for generations. The turkey, the stuffing, and all the fixin's. Everyone's traveling in from everywhere for that once a year tradition. Mama's got the best place settings out, and the kids are looking forward to Christmas or Hanukah. Everything will be perfect as usual, except for one thing: You — the right-wing kook of the family.

Over the years, you have learned your position in life, especially around the Thanksgiving dinner table. You are the one that got the phone call before you left: "Look, we'd love to have you here, but please — no politics, okay?" You agree, of course, and you make a commitment to the spouse to keep your opinions to yourself, so as not to start the annual argument that begins just after the Dallas Cowboys' game. Those with children have to make sure that no secrets get spilled about what mommy and daddy bought at the gun shows since last year. "Loose lips," ya know.

Of course, you know the annual drill: You'd never start the argument; you'll either get baited into one, or it'll be 7 on 1 — with you being the only right-thinking person in the bunch. What the heck happened to you in life, anyway?

"After September 11, this year will be different," you tell yourself. Unlike last year, the nation is unified — sort of. Last year was a disaster, wasn't it? You — the poor right-wing kook who actually read the Constitution (unlike your family, who thinks it's a living document subject to interpretation only by Alan Dershowitz) — tried in frustration to explain how the electoral college worked, to no avail. You had to digest turkey while hearing about dimpled chads, butterfly ballots, recounts, and the person you voted for stealing that damned election in Florida. Or, you got blamed as they mistakenly thought you voted for the winner, when you really voted for Pat Buchanan, who they think is akin to Satan. The scariest moment is when your family realized there were about 50 million idiots out there — just like you. They just couldn't understand.

Yes, this year will be different. Unlike the rest of the family, you probably won't be flying in. If anything, you'll drive to avoid being turned into terrorist hamburger, or calling your intended destination from an airport in BFE, explaining that you will be late because some idiot decided to pass gas or sneeze at 37,000 feet — forcing an emergency landing. Or having your family gang-raped by some National Guardsmen who never saw so many terrorists in their lives at one airport, and are upset because they can't spend the holidays with their folks — they gotta frisk you extra thoroughly. And not to mention the gloating baggage screeners who don't have to give a damn anymore because they're all getting huge raises, and eternal job security. This may open up the discussion Thursday morning.

Of course, don't think they won't notice you driving up in that gas-guzzling SUV you've recently picked up at 0% financing (how could you?), and the fact that you (of all people) may have a little bit more spending money since you re-financed your home loan due to the dropping interest rates. You — the right-wing kook — have a target painted on your forehead before you even walk in the door.

And you thought September 11 was gonna cause them to lighten up this year? Don't count on it.

Admit it — you've missed them: The union-man brother who is considering relocating to Mexico for a better job; the sister who still thinks Hillary is the best thing for New York, Clinton should have a third term, and Monica should be elevated to sainthood; the grandmother who couldn't figure out how to use the butterfly ballot; the in-law that gives money to Greenpeace, and that cute kid who's spending the family inheritance just to get a degree so he can work for the government one day expressing the wonderful principles of Mao from what he has experienced on campus this semester. Ah yes, the young enlightened one.

Everything will start out okay. The football junkies of the family won't have much to watch, since both the Detroit Lions and Dallas Cowboys royally suck this year. The testing starts before dinner, like people shooting flares to check the range. "So, did you buy a gas mask, or just stock up on Cipro?" , or "So, do you open your mail with rubber gloves now?" will be among the first comments whispered.

Rules of Engagement: Even though you may have bought your gas mask years ago for a mere 5 bucks at a gun show, don't gloat when you hear how much they may have spent on theirs — in late September. Remember, no one wants to hear your gloating — or your politics.

But they get to talk, and murmur, and grumble, about all the crazy right-wing kooks and wackos they saw when they went to their [first gun show](#) (since Sept 11), and about how scary all those weapons on display were, and what if they fell into the "wrong" hands, and how all guns should be registered and the [trigger locks](#) should be built in, for the safety of the children — especially with all these terrorists running loose in the country. But they went through that [waiting period](#), and got theirs. You might get a few whispers asking you about how to handle them safely. You'll answer, "We'll talk later."

And so, the feast begins. You'll know your place: You sit there in the low chair, say Grace, eat your turkey, and shut up. No politics, remember? No more repeats of last year. Just keep your head down, and you'll make it through this unscathed.

We figure they'll try a new tactic this year: It will start when someone asks how proud you are of that man you were defending at last year's dinner for winning (stealing) Florida, and how he's doing in the war. Keep in mind that some of your detractors from last year will have a change of heart — since we're now at war and all. But they'll still vote democrat come hell or high water next year, and pick on you because that Vermont Senator What's-His-Name switched to independent. (You'll refrain from using the word "traitor" in that conversation, too, right?)

Before you can get to respond, they start in on how well we're beating up on the pathetic Taliban, proselytize about 'nation-building', and how laws are being passed to make this country safer — "Hell, it's about time." It is here, where you will begin biting your tongue. But either you or someone else will mention the name of that God-awful bill: The PATRIOT ACT of 2001. "Yeah, you're one of those — aren't you? Aren't you happy about all this?"

At this point, we suggest that you — the right-wing kook of the family — immediately begin shoving mashed potatoes in your mouth as soon as possible. Don't swallow — just shove.

And shove.

Don't throw.

Knowing that you simply won't stuff it, you'll have to say something — like how these new laws are talking away our civil liberties. We should warn you now, it'll be like talking to a brick wall — several of them, and you know there are more of them than there are of you. They only tolerate you here because you're blood, or you married one of theirs. If that weren't the case, they would have called the Homeland Security Police on you long ago. You may get that extreme leftist of the family to agree with you. But be careful: They'll try to force you into agreeing that George W. Bush is a fascist.

Make sure you have your cell phone fully charged — someone probably won't want you to use their phone. After all, since those new anti-terrorism laws were put in place, the FBI is probably bugging every phone you use. (At least that's what they'll think, you being a right-wing kook and all.)

September 11 will remain the topic of conversation. This year, you may make in-roads on the topic of 'immigration reform' — but be nice. They already think you're a racist. When they start in on the poor, the homeless and environment, kindly tell them about 1400 families in the Klamath Falls, Oregon area, and the kind of Thanksgiving they are having.

Someone will insist that, from what they've been reading, the person spreading Anthrax through the mail system is one of your buddies. Forget going to the computer to some news site to prove otherwise. They probably won't let you near that thing, unless something doesn't work (you are probably the computer brain in the family too, you kooky right-wing geek). They figure if they let you go to one of those right-wing, extremist web sites, you'll get them logged on to the FBI terrorist watch list you're surely already on.

After supper, the conversation may drift in the direction of Christmas — what to get the kids and such. They'll be talking about X-boxes, and Play Stations, while you'll have to explain why your child only wants a New York City Firemen's helmet, a miniature B-52 bomber, or a starter pistol. (Remember to use the word "starter" when that one comes up.) You'll have to make up a good excuse for the desert and green cammies you may be outfitting the little critters with this year. Just tell them: "We want them to blend in with next year's police force."

After the first few after-dinner drinks, you may find out how conservative many of them have become since September 11, but they'll blame it on the booze, and you're still a right-wing kook.

But while we are all thankful for another year, say a prayer, and remember those whose families who have an empty chair this holiday season either from having loved ones lost on September 11, or forced to spend their Thanksgiving overseas. That's something all family members can all agree on.

But as you know, you're the weird one. You'll take your hits, during dinner and after, like you do every year. But this year, you may come out on the better end. Because you know that when no one is looking, you and the old man can quietly slip away so you can make the barter deal of the year — you'll get to barter some of your Cipro stash for some of his Viagra.

Happy Thanksgiving — from all of us here at SierraTimes.com.

*Nancy Johnson, Prudence Paise and Angel Shamaya also contributed to this report.*

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